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Istook Acts to Block Internet Obscenity

Washington, D.C. -- Today, Congressman Ernest Istook (R-OK) successfully offered an amendment requiring filtering software to block obscene material on federally-paid computers in public schools to which minors have access.

The full Appropriations Committee voted unanimously to add the amendment to the FY 2001 Labor, Health and Human Services Appropriations bill.

“We're not talking about censorship,” said Istook. “We're saying that our tax dollars should not be spent to put pornography in front of our kids.”

“The Internet is a great educational resource, but it’s also overflowing with pictures and material that shouldn’t be available to our kids. Even an innocent search will often take a computer user to these sites. Unless we use special software, this pornography can pop up on the screen even when a child is not looking for it. And we also want to remove the temptation, so kids won’t be trying to find it. When our tax money is used to provide Internet access, it must also protect our children from obscenity.”

Twice before, Istook has authored a similar funding restriction that has been adopted unanimously in appropriations bills. However, both times the restriction was removed from the final bill, at the insistence of the Clinton-Gore Administration. Istook predicted that he expects success this year, as support has grown.

Istook has also introduced similar stand-alone legislation (H.R. 2560) to require filtering software on federally-paid computers in public schools and libraries, to restrict access by minors to obscene material. The legislation provides that, if necessary, a school or library can provide an adult to help access non-obscene web sites that are inadvertently blocked by the software filter.